

Supports Intensity Scale Administration

The Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) was developed by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) to determine the support needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. Unlike other assessment tools, the SIS focuses primarily on identifying the support a person needs to be involved and engaged in their community. It is a comprehensive assessment instrument and evaluates the pattern and intensity of needed supports in 6 Life Activity Domains common to all people, as well as in protection and advocacy capabilities, and in exceptional medical and behavioral support needs.

SIS Interviews. Administration of the SIS requires a group discussion with the person with a developmental disability and those who know him or her well (e.g., family members, friends, legal decision makers, job coach, teacher, direct support staff and case managers as appropriate). Respondents should be individuals who have known the person being evaluated for at least three months and have observed the person in one or more environments for substantial periods of time.

Trained SIS Interviewers. Given the nature of the SIS and the scope of the interviews, it is critical that the interviewers be trained in administration of the SIS and be able to provide objective results. As AAIDD notes:

Our aim is simple: Train professionals to be excellent SIS interviewers. This means, training a professional to understand the unique, supports-oriented intent of the Scale, develop essential skills in interacting with individuals, and clearly understand each item measured by SIS. We anticipate that by doing this, SIS assessment results will be reliable and accurate, and that service decisions made for people with intellectual disabilities will be fair and equitable.¹

Who should be trained as a SIS Interviewer? Interviewers should:

- Be a professional working in the field of human services (e.g., case manager, psychologist, social worker)
- Have several years of direct work and interviewing experience with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Be able to integrate the information from multiple respondents to arrive at final ratings

Although case managers are responsible for service planning, not every case manager needs to be a SIS qualified interviewer. States determine which staff will receive training. Some states use state employees in Quality Management departments to perform the SIS assessments,

¹¹AAIDD website: http://www.siswebsite.org/cs/root/main/training/trainers_information

others utilize case managers or case manager supervisors, some states hire contractors to perform the assessments while some contract directly with AAIDD to field a cadre of interviewers. In HSRI's experience, states that use the SIS for resource allocation are best served by using professionals whose primary function is administration of the SIS.

Data Entry and Analysis. Once an interview is completed, the SIS interviewer enters information from the discussion meeting into a database, typically an online database available through AAIDD. Using AAIDD's database, the discussion information is translated into summary scores that identify a person's level of need for support. SIS assessment information is useful for service planning and plan review. SIS information and scores are also useful for resource allocation.

Frequency of SIS Review. States differ in the frequency with which SIS assessments are completed. SIS assessments may be helpful to states to administer as people enter the service system, when transitioning from youth services to adult system, periodically for service planning (annually, every 2 or 3 years), and as needed for resource allocation.

For More Information: Additional information on the SIS assessment, the interview process and training available from AAIDD can be found on the SIS web-site at www.siswebsite.org.